

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 March 2022

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6TH April 2022

Appeal Ref. APP/Q0505/D/22/3290204
45 Cromwell Road, Cambridge CB1 3EB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs G Rodriguez Herrera against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application ref. 21/03519/HFUL, dated 20 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 13 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as "*Rear single storey and two storey extension and loft conversion*".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matter

2. As alluded to in the reasons for refusal, the scheme also included a side extension, even though this is not specifically stated in the descriptions of the proposed works given on the application form and the Council's decision notice.

Main issues

3. The main issues are the effects of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings and upon the amenity and living conditions of the neighbours at 43 Cromwell Road with regard to the potential for any overbearing sense of enclosure.

Reasons

4. Nos 45 and 43 comprise a pair of 2-storey semi-detached houses with hipped end roofs. They are situated in an established and pleasant residential area. Given the curvature of Cromwell Road at this point, the houses are laid out in a staggered formation such that the north-facing side elevation of no. 45 is as equally prominent in the street scene as its principal front elevation.
 5. The appellant is proposing to enlarge the property with a 2-storey extension to the side, with the main roof taken across to form a gable end, and to the rear where the roof would project out as part of a flat-topped, mansard-type structure. In carrying out the work, the loft would be converted and a single-storey rear extension would be added.
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6. The appellant's case under both main issues is based on the existence of approved and completed extensions in the locality which show similar design characteristics and impacts on adjacent habitable room windows to the appeal scheme. In particular, I saw on my tour of the area the rear/side elevations of the properties at nos 35, 64 and 84 Cromwell Road. Whilst I can well understand the point the appellant is making, I do not have any detailed planning history about these cases and it is possible, as the Council indicates, that some or all of them may pre-date the adoption of the Cambridge Local Plan (LP) in October 2018. They did not appear to me to be examples of good design that should be followed. None of those cases involved a property with such a prominent gable end as the one at no. 45. In any event, each application is considered on its own individual merits.
7. The principle of extending the property is not at issue. However, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; so, development should add to the overall quality of the area and be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and sympathetic to local character. I consider that the appeal proposal is ill-judged in these important respects.
8. The 2-storey side extension would be built up to the northern boundary of the plot whilst the rear 2-storey extension and mansard roof extension would reach across the full width of the dwelling as elongated by the side extension. The proposed scheme would add substantial bulk and mass to the host property and dominate the building's original scale and character. For instance, no part of the original rear wall face or rear roof slope would remain visible.
9. The side extension would dispense with the original hipped end thus distorting the roof shape of the semi-detached pair as seen from Cromwell Road. The inclusion of a flat-topped mansard roof would create the appearance of a third storey and further distort the relationship between those properties, this time in private views from the rear. That such a roof design would not match or harmonize with the roof of the existing property would also be all too obvious in public views, given the prominence of the northern side elevation to observers approaching along the road from the north. Rather, it would appear contrived and architecturally ill-mannered with the aim of forcing the roof of the proposed rear extension to go no higher than the existing main ridge.
10. The proposed development would result in unsympathetic and insufficiently subservient additions to the existing dwelling which would destroy the character and integrity of the existing building and overwhelm its immediate setting as a semi-detached dwelling. This in turn would be harmful to the character and appearance of this residential area.
11. I find on the **first main issue** that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings. As the development would have a scale, mass, form, profile and design that would not be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling, its context or the surrounding area, there would be conflict with the aims of LP Policies 55 and 58. There would also be a failure to adhere to the overarching design themes within the Framework and the National Design Guide insofar as they relate to achieving well-designed places.

12. With regard to the second main issue, I was able to inspect the appeal site from within the grounds of 43 Cromwell Road. This adjoining property has a rear first-floor bedroom window very close to the common boundary. Given the overall height and projection of the proposed 2-storey rear extension and the mansard roof above and their position on the shared boundary with no. 43, I consider that the proposed development would create an unacceptable sense of enclosure and appear visually dominant and overbearing when seen from that closest neighbouring rear-facing bedroom at no. 43. The absence of objections from the occupiers of this property does not alter my findings in these respects.
13. I find on the **second main issue** that the proposed development would have a negative and unacceptable impact upon the amenity and living conditions of the neighbours at 43 Cromwell Road, taking into account the potential for an overbearing sense of enclosure. This would amount to an unneighbourly form of development in conflict with the aims of LP Policy 58. Similarly, there would also be a failure to comply with the Framework which seeks to ensure developments create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers.

Conclusion

14. My findings on the main issues are decisive to the outcome of this appeal. There is conflict with the development plan. The harm cannot be mitigated by the imposition of planning conditions and it is not outweighed by other material considerations. For the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that this appeal should not succeed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR